

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMITTEE TO STUDY ENFORCING COURT SANCTIONS

LANSING, MI, June 7, 2004 – A Michigan Supreme Court-appointed committee of seven judges and one court administrator will study ways to improve enforcement of fines and other court-ordered financial sanctions.

In a letter to the Court's appointees, Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan said that courts must enforce fines and court costs to hold offenders accountable. "Courts don't allow offenders to choose whether to comply with other sanctions, and payment of fines and costs are no different," she wrote.

Corrigan added that judges should "consider the financial means of offenders during sentencing"

Michigan Court Rules (MCR) 1.110, which went into effect on January 1, 2002, states that "[f]ines, costs, and other financial obligations must be paid at the time of assessment, except when the court allows otherwise for good cause shown." "Good cause" includes not being able to afford payment. In addition, MCR 2.002 allows judges to waive or suspend costs and fines for those who cannot afford to pay.

Some monies from court fines and costs go to counties and municipalities where the court is located. Proceeds from court fines also support some state initiatives, such as the Crime Victims Rights Fund.

In her letter appointing the committee, Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan indicated that "judicial leadership is critical" to improving enforcement of fines and costs. She wrote that committee members were "selected based on their demonstrated leadership in court administration. I am confident that their work will bring great benefit to our judicial system."

The committee includes:

Hon. Philip D. Schaefer, 9th Circuit Court, Kalamazoo County – Chairperson
Hon. Paul H. Chamberlain, Isabella County Trial Court
Hon. Alton T. Davis, 46th Circuit Trial Court, Crawford, Kalkaska and Otsego Counties
Hon. Julie A. Nicholson, 52nd District Court, Rochester Hills, Oakland County
Hon. Craig D. Alston, 74th District Court, Bay County

Hon. Michael F. Skinner, Eaton County Probate Court
Hon. David L. Stowe, Grand Traverse County Probate Court
Mr. Michael J. Dillon, Court Administrator, 12th District Court, Jackson County

State Court Administrator John Ferry said that “Enforcement of court orders for fines and other financial obligations is a top priority for Michigan courts.”

Elizabeth Barber, who was recently named Trial Court Collections Project Manager by the Supreme Court, will provide staff support to the committee.

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